

REBORN JEWS: A NEW JEWISH COMMUNITY IN GERMANY

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One of the most surprising developments of the last decade of the twentieth century was the growth of a new Jewish community in Germany largely composed of Jews from the former Soviet Union. As Jeffrey Peck observed, “the Nazis conceived of a new Europe without Jews, but today we have a new Europe with renewed Jewish communities the most surprising being in Germany.”¹ Seeing the arrival in Germany of upwards of 150,000 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, observers in the 1990s, might have been tempted to assume that these primarily Russian Jews were descending upon an essentially homogenous community of Jewish German Holocaust survivors and their descendents. In fact, however, the situation of the Jewish community in present-day Germany is more complex and presents both challenges and opportunities for its members.

Even the nature of the Jewish immigration process needs to be deconstructed in light of the present situation. Peck distinguishes between two concepts that have a significant place in Jewish history and pertain to the Jewish immigrants in Germany today: one is the exile identity defined by the Hebrew term *Galut*; the other is the relocated condition called Diaspora. “To be in Galut,” Peck explains, “is to be in the wrong place; it is to be dislocated, like a limb out of place.” He argues that, “Galut and Diaspora need to be distinguished because the first, defined as exile, suggests anguish, forced homelessness and the sense of things being not as they should be and the latter suggests absence from some center...[but] does not connote anything so hauntingly negative.”² The new Jewish community in Germany is composed not of people in Galut, but of immigrants who have chosen to settle in a new Diaspora land.

Nevertheless Diaspora living is always somewhat problematic, particularly in the case of Jews. “Diaspora identity is a disaggregated identity,” Jonathan Boyarin indicates. “Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not ideological, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another.”³ One of the anomalies of Nazi racial policy was that, in spite of heated rhetoric about “Jewish blood”, Nazi laws ultimately defined Jews on the basis of religious

affiliation and membership in the Jewish community rather than on biological criteria. Thus the question of who is a Jew has always been and continues to be a complex one.

Jewish identity in Germany in the immediate postwar period was certainly caught up in the chaos of the time. In 1945 a remnant, approximately 15,000 Jewish Germans, of the 600,000-member pre-Nazi-era Jewish community remained in Germany. They were Jews who had survived in hiding or were spared by their marriages to Aryans who refused to abandon them. A small group of Jewish Germans returning from the camps added to that number.

However, soon the dynamics of the refugee situation brought Jews from other parts of war-torn Europe to Germany, if only briefly. As Michael Brenner writes, “It is surely one of the ironies of history that it was Germany, of all places that became a haven for Jewish refugees in the first years after the war. Unlike the non-Jewish DPs, who had mostly left by 1945, the number of Jewish DPs in the American Occupation Zone in Germany during 1946 rose from just 40,000 to over 145,000. In the summer of 1947 about 182,000 Jewish DPs were living in Germany.”⁴ The concentration of Jews in the American Zone was exacerbated by the fact that the British were reluctant to accept Jewish refugees in their zone because they feared that these refugees were headed to Palestine and would complicate British problems with the Arabs in that area. With hopes and plans to settle in numerous locations, many of the camp survivors were eager to leave Germany as quickly as possible, and most of these DPs did so over the next few years. Other Jews lived in Germany briefly until they could obtain sponsorship or offers of open doors for emigration.

Between 12,000 and 15,000 Jewish DPs of Eastern European origin stayed in Germany and joined the equal number of Jewish German survivors. They in turn were joined by a small group of Jewish exiles who chose to return to Germany. These returnees were often significant cultural or intellectual figures who hoped to flourish in a place where their language and reputation would be recognized.

The efforts at integration of the German Jewish survivors and their children were fraught with difficulties. They faced lingering antisemitism. There were brutal memories and the nagging question of how they could choose to live in the land of the “murderers” of so many of their people and often of members of their own families. There was the

opprobrium of much of the world's Jewry. Because most international Jewish organizations and the Israeli government and Israeli institutions were unwilling to recognize Germany as a legitimate home for Jews in the post-Holocaust era, the Jewish community in Germany and the government of the newly-formed Federal Republic were obliged to reconcile and create their own supporting network. "German Jews did not feel welcome within international Jewish organizations," Jay Geller writes, "and they realized they could not depend on these groups for material support."⁵ Thus Jewish groups in Germany counted more on help from their close relationship with the West German government. Reversing Nazi laws that had deprived Jewish Germans of their citizenship, the new government granted citizenship to anyone whose parents had been German citizens or who could claim German ethnicity. Judaism became one of the four recognized religions in the Federal Republic, joining Evangelical Protestantism, Catholicism, and Jehovah's Witnesses and entitling Jewish institutions to government support from tax revenues.

On July 19, 1950, with strong financial support from the recently establishment Federal Republic, the Jewish community organized the Zentralrat Der Juden in Deutschland, a federation that became the major representative body of Jewish Germans. Originally based in Dusseldorf and Bonn in the Rheinland, it currently has its seat in Berlin. Its leaders, particularly Heinz Galinski and Ignatz Bubis, became major figures in German life recognized by most because of their pictures in the press, their appearances on television, and their attendance at public functions. In spite of this institutional recognition, Galinski, as an Auschwitz survivor, and many of his contemporaries could not escape the past. They defined a Jewish community that lived in Germany but saw itself as apart from the German majority and remained suspicious of it. Galinski was Zentralrat President for forty-two years and saw his role as Frederick Kempe states, "primarily as a Jewish watchdog who barked loudly and angrily whenever Germans misbehave."⁶ As the following decades brought stability and growing prosperity, this still small community expanded somewhat in the 1970s and '80s when Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, seeking greater economic opportunity or, in some cases, the opportunity to assert their Jewish identity, settled in Germany.

These opportunities were not immediately available to Russian Jews before (pre-Wende) the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1990. During the 1970s and '80s, Russian-speaking Jews were only able to immigrate to Israel, where, after a few years stay, they often moved on to the United States or Germany. These Jewish Russians, while generally unhappy with their experience in Israel, had become reacquainted with what Y. Michael Bodemann calls an "Israelized" version of Jewish culture.⁷ The Jewish Russians who immigrated to Germany after 1989 came directly and lacked the Israeli experience. The end of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union opened up the possibility of larger scale Jewish immigration to Germany. The major movement of Jews from the Soviet Union actually began in 1988 when the de Maziere government of the German Democratic Republic, hoping to gain greater acceptance from the Western powers, invited Jews to come to the GDR. The large-scale migration of Jews to the Federal Republic and subsequently to the newly reunited Germany followed and further challenged the notion that Germany was a homogeneous state.

The notion of Germany as a non-immigration state was an unchallenged assumption of Germany's leaders of all political persuasions and had even been embodied in law. "In 1977," Michael Minkenberg notes, "a joint commission of the federal and state governments formulated some principles for the politics of citizenship. The first principle is simple, 'The Federal Republic of Germany is not a country of immigration.'"⁸ This statement was still being made into the early years of this century. It was not true in 1977, and it certainly is not true today. At the end of World War II twelve million "ethnic Germans" from outside its borders settled in the Federal Republic. Foreign "guest workers" mostly from Turkey were invited into Germany in the 1960s and '70s when the country was experiencing great economic growth and had a shortage of unskilled laborers. These immigrants often stayed and sent for their families. At the time of unification in 1989, there were five million foreigners (non-Germans according to Article 116 of the Basic Law) living in the Federal Republic. "By 1999," Minkenberg states, "immigration to Germany had reached a magnitude that was comparable only to that of the USA. Since 14 percent of the population was born outside of the country, the repeated claim that Germany was 'not a country of immigration' could be treated only as a *Lebenslüge* (a false myth) of the Federal Republic."⁹

Estimates of the number of Jewish immigrants to Germany from the former Soviet Union vary from 100,000 to 200,000 depending on the criteria that are used to define Jewish identity. The debate about Jewishness continues today, and an article in the weekly newspaper *Jüdisches Allgemeine* on April 3rd of this year asked, “Why should there be debate about the question ‘Who is a Jew according to religious law?’”¹⁰ There seem to be many answers to this question. Many of the Jews coming from the former Soviet Union had no understanding of the Jewish religion. Many had intermarried. Others had only Jewish fathers, which did not make them Jewish according to the criteria of the Orthodox Jewish religious establishment, which was until recently the only Jewish authority recognized by the German government.

Where necessary, the German government has provided these immigrants with help in housing, language training, job placement, and medical aid. While Jewish immigrants over the age of sixty have been unlikely to find employment and, thus, have been more likely to need continuing assistance, the majority of the Jewish immigrants have soon become self-sufficient. More than ninety percent of these immigrants have come from the European part of the former Soviet Union with the largest number from Moscow, Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa, and Leningrad. This population is well educated, much more so, in fact, than are non-Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union or any other area. Those with university-level studies predominate at sixty-eight percent, and twenty percent of these are engineers. Teachers, doctors, farm workers, and musicians are also strongly represented. Many of these immigrants have needed language instruction and additional professional training to meet the technology standards and licensing requirements of Germany, but most have met these challenges successfully.¹¹

The Holocaust and Germany’s efforts to make restitution for it loom behind the government’s willingness to make exceptions to its laws in order to accept Jewish immigrants. It took Germans a generation to begin to face the Holocaust in a public way. This process accelerated dramatically when Willy Brandt became Chancellor of the Federal Republic in 1969 and made young Germans more conscious of the crimes of the Nazi era. He encouraged public interest in Jewish culture, and German officials and the media became increasingly sensitive to the needs of the Jewish community and eager to be seen as supportive. West Germany’s confrontation with the Holocaust and recognition

of a Jewish component in German culture was not matched in the GDR. “The suppression and marginalization of the memory of the Holocaust in East Germany reproduced the subordinate position of the Jewish question in Communist ideology before 1933,” Jeffrey Herf points out. “It is striking how little the cataclysms of World War II and the Holocaust changed these long-held views.”¹² Nevertheless, as I observed in 1980, in the Federal Republic the Holocaust had become and remains a defining issue in the relationship between Christian Germans and Jews.¹³ “No normality: the Holocaust binds Germans and Jews together like probably no other two peoples,” Rolf Schuette states in his 2005 study for the American Jewish Committee. “This creates potential for both hatred and opportunities. Indifference and ‘normality’ are not likely to characterize this unique relationship in the foreseeable future. Thus, German-Jewish relations because of and in spite of the Holocaust have always had and will continue to have a special character.”¹⁴

At the same time, other observers of the new Jewish community in Germany argue that the centrality of the Holocaust exists only for those Jews who can trace their roots back to pre-Nazi Germany. They contend that the Holocaust lacks significance for immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Robin Ostow, for example, claims that Jews from the former Soviet Union have no memory of Nazi oppression or of the Holocaust.¹⁵ However, this frequently made claim is open to challenge. The Nazis and their local collaborators murdered many Jewish victims in the Western part of the Soviet Union. At a recent meeting at the United States Holocaust Museum, it was estimated that Einsatzgruppen and their auxiliaries shot between one million and one and one half million Jews in Ukraine, the origin point of many of today’s post-Soviet Jews who have settled in Germany. Otto Ohlendorff and his Einsatzgruppe D, for example, murdered 90,000 Jews in the Smolensk area in 1942, and Babi Yar is part of Jewish memory as well. About 800,000 Jews served in the Soviet armed forces fighting Germany, and many starved in Leningrad under German siege. Many others were in Soviet partisan groups. As many as 1.5 million Jewish soldiers, partisans, and members of resistance groups fought against Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Jewish contingent was a major part of that number.¹⁶ Thus, even though many Soviet Jews who were fortunate to remain behind Soviet lines of defense were not killed or deported, they certainly had vivid

memories of the brutal war on the Eastern front. Many also lost relatives and friends who were not able to stay behind Soviet lines and became victims of German murder programs. Therefore, many Soviet Jews made the decision to move to Germany in spite of Holocaust memories not because of their total absence.

Although Ostow also makes the frequently heard claim that the immigration of Soviet Jews to Germany was unexpected, I for one predicted that movement in the summer of 1990, and I was not alone. Shortly before a trip to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany organized by the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, which I was accompanying as historian, a ***Boston Globe*** reporter asked me to tell him something interesting about the area we would be visiting. I told him that there would soon be a new Jewish community in Germany composed of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. He dismissed this prediction as too far-fetched. On December 29, 2005 Colin Nickerson of the ***Boston Globe*** wrote an article entitled, “A Jewish renaissance takes root in Germany, new generation reclaims its heritage” in which he quotes new Jewish immigrants who expressed reasons for coming to Germany similar to those that I had mentioned to the ***Globe*** reporter in 1990. “Germany is Europe and I am European as much as I am a Jew,” Frida Scheinberg, a veterinarian who recently arrived in Germany from Ukraine, said. “It feels safe and prosperous. Its cities, its climate, its customs all seem familiar. Israel seems strange to me, with the hot sun and the hot tempers.” Nickerson notes, “Partly to atone for the Holocaust, Germany offers resettlement programs for Jews from Eastern Europe. It is much easier for Jews to win legal entry to Germany than other parts of Western Europe or the United States. Israel also keeps open doors, but many Jews from the former Soviet Union see Israel as too dangerous – because of the struggle with the Palestinians – or as too alien, because of its Middle Eastern culture and desert climate.”¹⁷

Although the German government has retreated somewhat from its open door policy in the last few years, this policy played a major role in the development of the new Jewish community in Germany. Before the 2003 changes in rules, it was sufficient for a citizen of the former Soviet Union to claim Jewish ancestry without needing to prove it. Furthermore, consistent with Reformed Jewish practice but in contradiction to Orthodox Jewish belief, Jewish ancestry could be either maternal or paternal, and Jewish identity

by conversion could be claimed irrespective of whether the conversion was conducted through Orthodox or Liberal jurisdiction. The applicant could also, in theory, bring his entire immediate non-Jewish family with him or her.

As a result of this liberal policy, the future of the Jewish community in Germany is tied to the immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe rather than the members of the German survivor community. These recent Jewish immigrants are having children and are a growing community. The Jewish German survivors, traumatized by their Holocaust experiences, often did not. Grünberg reports that, “A relatively large proportion of the Jewish survivors in Germany that I interviewed were childless”¹⁸ This pattern of childlessness even affects the children of survivors who did have children and decided to stay in Germany. Their children often inherited great insecurities, and many of them chose not to have children.

Today’s Jewish Germans wrestle with the question of how their Jewishness is defining a new Jewish culture and how that culture intersects with German culture as a whole. If there is to be a new Jewish culture in Germany today, it will have to be a blend of earlier German Jewish culture and that created by the new Russian Jewish immigrants. Sander Gilman writes, “When I first began my work in this area I was met with a great deal of anxiety and animosity. Many German Jews still felt that the Jewish cultural component had ended in the country in 1933.”¹⁹ In a recent lecture Julius Schoeps, director of the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European and Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam, one of the growing number of institutions set up to deal with Jewish studies at German universities, compares the pre-1933 Jews of Germany with those of the current period. “Those who called themselves German Jews believed they possessed a specific identity,” he states. “Jews did not see themselves as Jews but as German Jews.”²⁰ He argues that, although Germany boasts the fastest growing Jewish community in the world, “the German- Jewish symbiosis” died during the Nazi era and a new identity for Jews in Germany needs to be created. This process he argues will be difficult for Jews who are searching for a Jewish identity as well as a German one.

Studying the writings of Russian Jewish immigrant authors who have grappled with the nature of their Jewish identity, Gilman observes that for these Russian immigrant authors, “Becoming Jewish means becoming German,”²¹ or at least to be recognized as

Jewish in Germany means also adopting the German language and German identity. Gilman points out that to have a claim on Jewish identity in Germany that is recognized by other Germans, a writer must write in German. “For in Germany, as in the United States,” he argues, “the role of the non-native writer writing about the Diaspora in their indigenous language is always suspect.”²² Yet these new Jewish immigrants often seem to many members of the older Jewish community and to other Western Jews to have a strange and jarring sense of what it means to be Jewish.

Even when they are writing in German and trying to assert their Jewish identity, new immigrant authors manifest religious confusion in their literature. Gilman cites a representative example in a confrontation described in a recent novel by the immigrant author, Anna Sokhrina, in which a character, responding to a Jewish official functionary who wants to figure out whether she really is Jewish, declares: “I swear by the Lord Jesus Christ that I am Jewish.”²³ Wladimir Kaminer, whom Gilman describes as the “hottest” of the “cool” multicultural Jewish writers to come out of the newest Russian Diaspora, recounts in his novel *Russendisko* an interview between a Rabbi and a new Russian immigrant claiming to be Jewish. “She is asked what Jews ate at Easter. She replied, ‘We Jews ate Matzos.’ When asked what they were she replied, ‘But of course they are the cookies which are baked from an ancient receipt [sic] out of the blood of small children.’”²⁴ Certainly many of the Soviet immigrants entering Germany were ignorant of Judaism, but they could respond to such other manifestations of recalled Jewish culture as Klezmer music.

The popularity of Klezmer music in Germany is a phenomenon that defies simple explanation but, perhaps more loudly than any other cultural component, proclaims the presence and acceptance of the new Jewish German community. “‘Klezmer in Germany,’ Heiko Lehmann observes, “is a topic which fascinates researchers, musicians and audiences alike. Germany has become a major touring country for American-Jewish performers since the 1980s, when Germany still divided into East and West first started to produce indigenous Klezmer bands.”²⁵ The beginning of the 1990s was marked by a Klezmer boom, featuring dozens, later hundreds of new German Klezmer bands. This craze is particularly surprising in light of the fact that Klezmer music had virtually disappeared from Germany for almost two centuries. As a result of the decline of Yiddish

language and culture in Germany among the largely acculturated Jewish population and the hostility of the Christian population to Yiddish, Klezmer music was largely unheard in Germany since the eighteenth century. “Neither German gentiles nor German Jews liked it,” Lehmann notes, “the first thinking of it as ridiculous, the latter being afraid of being taken for Eastern Jews.”²⁶ Without the strong prejudices of earlier years, contemporary German musicians could hear Klezmer music and appreciate it. Through it, they could recapture an aspect of Jewish culture they believe is authentic and many of them like. Jewish Germans have been more ambiguous about this phenomenon, but it may serve as a bridge to the Eastern European Jews who have some cultural memory of this music and respond to it emotionally. Many Christian musicians who play Klezmer music have made an effort to learn about and understand the Jewish culture that produced it.

Dialogue between Jews and Christians in Germany has often been tied to initiatives of the churches. The Evangelical Church founded *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Reconciliation) shortly after the war and began a series of dialogues between Jewish and Christian Germans and an education program for Christian German youth. It established a conference center outside Auschwitz and brought groups of young Germans there to attend overnight and weeklong sessions dealing with the Holocaust and Christian–Jewish relations. Action Reconciliation also was an advocate for the development of an association of monuments and memorials developed at concentration camp sites and other locations connected with the Holocaust. One of its leaders, Thomas Lutz, who worked to create The Topography of Terror Foundation on the site of the former Gestapo Headquarters in Berlin, became the Director of the Association of Monuments and Memorials. The Catholic Church through its Central Committee of German Catholics created a discussion group “Jews and Christians”. Its declaration issued on March 16, 2005 indicated its awareness of the new Jewish community and the need to face the Christian dogma, liturgy and historical problems, which have been so pernicious to Christian-Jewish relations. Point one of the declaration notes that Jews and Christians have changed. Recognizing that there are more Jews in the reunited Germany than at any time since the end of World War II, it calls on Christians to confront the task

of insuring that the fourth postwar generation will remember the Holocaust, a task that is now possible since “fewer Christians [are] faced with greater tasks.”²⁷

While some Jewish leaders might challenge the idea that German Christians previously had more important tasks than religious reconciliation and education, the document of the Central Committee of German Catholics mandates education for Catholics and other Christians to expose myths and change teachings that contributed to hatred of Jews. It also urges dialogue between Christians and Jews without “Missionizing”. Certainly the mainly Orthodox Christians from the former Soviet Union who emigrate to Germany come with all sorts of myths, stereotypes, and prejudices and need as much education as possible. Many Christian Germans still retain attitudes and misconceptions, which require reeducation as well. One of Germany’s current leading Rabbis said in a recent interview that a key reason for inter-religious dialogue is that, “One sees that the other has no horns.”²⁸

In these discussions, all the leaders of the Jewish groups have had deep roots in Germany, and a new generation of leaders has yet to emerge. The leaders of the Central Council of Jews have been German Jews who were survivors of the Holocaust. Charlotte Knobloch who was chosen leader of the Central Council in July of 2006 has expressed optimism about the future of the Jewish community in Germany and specifically its growth through immigration. Knobloch who led the Jewish community in Munich since 1985 said, “For me, the point about immigration is that the Jewish community in Germany should blossom as it did before the Nazi times. I want to experience the revival of Judaism as it was before 1933, which made such a cultural and intellectual contribution for the country. I hope that Germany can again be proud. It would be good if the population could become aware that the existence of Jews in Germany could help win back Germany’s reputation in the world.”²⁹ Knobloch reinforces the twin themes: that Germany can be good for Jews, and that Jews can be good for Germany.

While Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia have generally chosen to make their homes in Germany rather than in Israel, the support for Israel within the Jewish German community is very strong. The major Jewish newspaper, the *Jüdisches Allgemeine*, constantly features stories about Israel and advocates for Israeli interests. Its reporters covered Chancellor Merkel’s recent trip to Israel extensively, and its editors

declared the trip to be a diplomatic triumph for Germany. Merkel's speech before the Knesset was reprinted in its pages. The only national weekly Jewish newspaper, the *Jüdisches Allgemeine* reminds its readers that it is in the tradition of *Allgemeinen Zeitung des Judentums*, which was founded in 1837. In 1890, Rudolf Mosse acquired that newspaper, and it became part of the Mosse newspaper chain. In 1922 it was renamed *CVZeitung* and became the communications organ of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. The last issue of the *CVZeitung* appeared on November 3, 1938. Today's *Jüdisches Allgemeine* claims its place in this long tradition of a Jewish German press while it also speaks of the nature and interests of the new Jewish community. Many of the Jews from the former Soviet Union read newspapers in Russian, but the *Jüdisches Allgemeine* hopes to attract many of them as readers as they become more fluent in German and more attached to the Jewish community and thereby to increase its weekly circulation of about 25,000 copies.

The major German newspapers pay considerable attention to the Jewish community and to Israel, and prominent columnists often write about Jewish issues. Joschka Fischer, the former Social Democratic Foreign Minister in the government of Gerhard Schroeder, writes a weekly column in *Die Zeit*, and he remains one of the most popular political figures in Germany. Although emerging from a radical leftist background, Fischer is one of the strongest supporters of the Jewish community in Germany, and he argues vociferously that Germany needs to support Israel. In one of his recent weekly columns in *Die Zeit*, he recalled an incident from his childhood in the 1950s to illustrate how Germany's relationship to its Jewish community has changed. Accompanying his mother to a resort, he witnessed her conversation with a friend about Jews. "I asked very naively," Fischer recounts, "what are the Jews? I knew no Jew, they did not exist as part of our everyday existence in Germany in the 50's." His mother's reply: "don't ask, that is part of the wicked past."³⁰ Returning in 2007 from a year of teaching at Princeton, Fischer used the anecdote to convey his keen awareness that Jews were now more a part, although still a special part, of the everyday life of Germany.

Certainly another major change in German society since Fischer's youth has been the immigration of 2.5 million Turkish Muslims to Germany, a development that also presents challenges to the new Jewish German community. The question of the

relationship between Jews and Muslims in Germany is multifaceted and nuanced. Generally the discussion is cast in terms of Jews and Turks because Turks make up the bulk of the Muslim population of Germany. The use of these terms speaks not only to the national identity of most Muslims in Germany but also presumes that Jews are a distinct people as well as members of a religious group. The history of Jews as an oppressed minority is often compared to the recent experience of Turks in Germany. The two groups are also characterized as minorities in a Christian German society where, according to a recent Christian Democratic Party statement, it is necessary for one to have the values of a Western European Christian to be a true German. However there are numerous problems in looking for parallels and bases for unity between the two groups.

While Turks are new arrivals, most coming since the 1960s, Jews have a thousand year history in Germany. That part of German Jewry that has deep roots in the German past reacts extremely negatively to the idea of being grouped with a recent immigrant people. It is a reminder of the racist ideology, which triumphed during the Nazi years with the labeling of Jews as a foreign element in Germany deserving of disenfranchisement, discrimination, banishment, and ultimately extermination. In spite of this difference, some Jewish Germans connect anti-Turkish hostility and prejudice to antisemitism. Lynn Rapaport captures this sentiment in statements by Anna, a forty-year-old Jewish German physician. “I believe there is anti-Semitism in the German population,” Anna states. “It’s not probable that there shouldn’t be because there has been so much for centuries. I don’t believe it’s been erased. So, there must be. And there must be among physicians. And it must be among my generation as well. The best proof, I would say, is that anti-Semitism today is not centered against Jews, but solely directed against Turks. But it’s the same thing.” Miriam, a thirty-year-old housewife, argues that the foreigners who bear the brunt of xenophobic attacks function as a buffer for violence that would otherwise, she believes, be directed against Jews. “Even if I’m not personally confronted,” Miriam argues, “I see there are still people who hate Jews. I know if there weren’t foreigners living in Germany, Jews would be attacked.”³¹ In spite of Anna’s and Miriam’s misgivings, most polls indicate that Christian Germans publicly declare that

Jews from Eastern Europe have made a more successful adjustment to life in Germany than have either ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe or Turks.³²

The relationship between Jews and Turks is also affected by the conflict of Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East. Although Turkey has had a moderate policy toward Israel and Turks bristle when conflated with Arabs, nevertheless many Turks are sympathetic toward Palestinians and do not support the Turkish government's policies toward Israel. While recognizing the challenges that Jewish and Turkish immigrants face in attempting to work together, Peck sites the work of the Turkish German scholar Zafer Senocak to find some cause for optimism.³³ Although critical of many policies of the German government, Senocak has hopes for a more positive multi-cultural future for Germany. "There is hope," he states, "in the fact that, fifty years after the nearly complete annihilation of the Jews in Germany, there are once more citizens of the Jewish faith there. That [sic] there can be something like a Turk who is a Muslim and also a German citizen."³⁴ The Turkish community supported the Jewish community after the Istanbul Synagogue bombing in 1994 and has also been supportive when desecrations of Jewish cemeteries have taken place, just as Heinz Galinski and Ignatz Bubis, in their capacities as leaders of the Zentralrat, have attended Turkish anti-discrimination rallies.

Such Turkish authors as Mehmet Erbarkan and Cem Özdemir have used the history of Jews in Germany to frame their own arguments about the Turkish immigrant community. Erbarkan has concluded that Jews made the mistake of trying to assimilate in a society that did not want them. He urges Turks to organize to protect their interests and not to have unrealistic expectations about their acceptance by their Christian German neighbors. Özdemir, a Green Party member and the first Turkish ethnic representative in the Bundestag, is conscious of the differences between the Jewish and Turkish experiences. "Comparing us to the Jews is absurd," he argues. "Such comparisons are an insult to the dead of Auschwitz and to every citizen of modern Germany."³⁵ In spite of, or perhaps even because of, these perceived differences, Erbarkan and Özdemir see cooperation as both possible and desirable between Jews and Turks in Germany. A recent event, which received considerable attention in the German press, evidences the possibility of a brighter future for Jewish and Turkish Germans. Alsi Bayram is a Turkish German woman whose father was shot by a Neo-Nazi when she was twelve

years old. At the age of twenty-three, she was chosen Miss Germany in a beauty and talent contest, and now at twenty-six she is starring as Ann Frank in a new production of “The Diary of Ann Frank.”³⁶

The on-going public discourse on Jewish experiences in the Holocaust, personified for example in Ann Frank’s poignant story, became enmeshed in the conception and form of the Jewish Museum in Berlin. The opening of the massive building in September of 2001 was a major event in the history of postwar Germany. The museum, which was first envisioned as a small annex to the traditional Berlin City Museum morphed into a large fractured star-shaped structure that dwarfs the original Baroque building. Designed by the architect Daniel Libeskind and directed by the German-born former American Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal, the museum has become a major Berlin landmark. A controversial building because of its size and design, it also embodies the confusion of the current Jewish community in Germany and their brethren abroad as to how to present Jewish history and position Jewish life in Germany today. Speaking at the opening of the museum, Blumenthal acknowledged that, “there was plenty of controversy as the idea was debated and evolved.”³⁷ Some, including the architect Libeskind, envisioned the structure as a Holocaust memorial highlighting that tragedy as the central feature of Jewish German history. Others wanted to tell the story of a thousand years of Jewish history and accomplishment in Germany.

The latter advocates for the museum believe that it should highlight the more positive aspects of Jewish German history and provide a basis upon which the new German community can build. They argue that, for the greater German public, the Jewish Museum should also embody a history that most Germans do not know and demonstrate what Germans and Germany lost as a result of the Nazi years. They want to balance victim status with a more positive view, which would appeal more to the younger Jews whose families have made Germany their home. Recent exhibitions at the museum attempt to straddle the line between the two viewpoints. “Changing Tides-The Shipping Magnate Arnold Bernstein” focuses on the experiences of Bernstein, a Jew who played a significant role in the economy of the Weimar Republic by creating one of the leading privately owned shipping companies in Germany. When the Nazis arrested him and

expropriated his company, Bernstein immigrated to the United States. Another recent exhibition was entitled “Typical! Clichés About Jews and Others.” It dealt with stereotyping and prejudice and could be interpreted to confront anti-Turkish feeling as well as antisemitism. Still another exhibition was organized around the life and writings of Franz Kafka, who was an amalgam of three cultures: German, Jewish, and Czech.

The construction of the museum and the choice of its director are indications of the new involvement of Jewish Americans in the life of the Jewish community in Germany today. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, most Jewish Americans and their organizations advocated that all Jews leave Germany and opposed the idea of a new Jewish German community. Consequently there was little interest in establishing outreach programs and satellite offices in Germany. The American Jewish Committee was the first Jewish organization to accept the fact that there would be a Jewish presence in the new Germany and decided to participate. It established a number of exchange programs in the 1970s and a more significant program in conjunction with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 1980. “Perhaps the most important step taken by the AJC to strengthen its relationship with Germany, an indication of its commitment and openness,” Peck notes, “was the launching of the Berlin Office/Lawrence and Lee Ramer Center for German-Jewish relations in Berlin in 1998.”³⁸ It was fitting that the American Jewish Committee spearhead the initiative to reestablish the American / German Jewish connection because Jewish Germans who had immigrated to the United States founded the AJC in 1906. As a result of its leadership actions, many Germans far overrate the influence of the AJC and assume it speaks for the great majority of Jewish Americans.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation has also worked to link Jewish Americans to the Jewish community in Germany. In an effort to deal specifically with the needs of Russian immigrants to Germany, the foundation established an office in 1996 in the heart of the revitalized Jewish quarter of Berlin. In October 1999 it dedicated the Lauder Jüdisches Lehrhaus in a renovated building that had been a Jewish school until 1941. After WWII this building became the headquarters of an East German welfare organization and was given to the Berlin Jewish community in 1998. It is located next to the Rykestrasse Synagogue, one of only two synagogues to have survived Kristallnacht intact. The Lehrhaus comprises three units: a Teacher Resource Center, an Adult Education Institute,

and a Beit Midrasch Program for students. The Beit Midrash d'Berlin is the first yeshiva in Germany in decades and offers a full-time program as well as part-time study for university students. It also sponsors programs in Jewish education in other areas of Germany with the goal of providing Jewish education for new immigrants so that they may become a vital part of a new Jewish community.

Numerous observers see the treatment of Jewish Germans as a barometer of national democratic and humane values. Otto Schilly, Interior Minister of the Federal Republic, speaking at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Leo Baeck Institute, said, "The immigration into the Jewish congregations is, not least, a considerable demonstration of trust in the stability of German democracy and in the openness of our society. But we must work to maintain that trust." He added that, "It is obvious that the large number of new members also poses some problems for Jewish congregations in Germany. This is why we must support the congregation's necessary efforts on behalf of integration."³⁹ It is significant, and perhaps ironic, that this speech was sponsored by an organization founded in Jerusalem and New York and named after the most prominent German Rabbi to survive the Holocaust and who had concluded in 1945 that Jewry was finished in Germany. It is also meaningful that the institution that bears Leo Baeck's name now has a center in Berlin and was the site of a speech concentrating on the new Jewish community in Germany.

There are many unanswered questions. Will the Jewish German community continue to grow? Will it attract Jewish youths? In what way will its members be Jews, and in what ways will they be Germans? How will they relate to the Turkish Muslims? The uncertainties and ambiguities of group identities and allegiances and national values and prejudices remain in play and perhaps are best focused through the lens of individual experiences.

In 1995 when Susan Stern, born near London, educated in the USA, and a twenty-five-year resident of Germany teaching at the University of Frankfurt/Main, spoke at a commemoration program designed to explore German themes fifty years after the end of the war, she talked about living as a Jew in Germany. "To the vast majority of the non-Jewish population," Stern noted, "the Jews living in their midst are unknown as real people. Since there are so few of them, there are relatively few Germans who have

ever consciously met or gotten to know one personally. At the same time, however, Jews and things Jewish are very present in the German collective awareness, indicating an interest that sometimes borders on outright fascination. History and the conscience-complex certainly play a role here. The German media maintains and encourages that interest by allotting the Jews at home and abroad considerably more coverage than their numerical presence in Germany would seem to warrant.... As a result of all the media exposure, a number of prominent and outspoken Jews - Ignatz Bubis, the head of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany, for example, as well as a handful of authors, journalists, historians, performers and politicians have become household names and faces.”⁴⁰ The sometimes uncomfortable visibility of Jewish Germans could be a double-edged sword as both Susan Stern and Ignatz Bubis understood.

Bubis was among the prominent Jewish Germans who tried to recapture the German identity that many of their ancestors believed they already had. In 1992, Bubis succeeded Heinz Galinski as leader of the Zentralrat. The community that Galinski had headed averaged about 20,000 Jews, most of whom were elderly, and the expectation was that it might totally disappear. By the time Bubis took the helm, the demographics of the community and its prospects for growth and survival had dramatically changed. Bubis tended to look forward, while Galinski had been more inclined to look backward. In the words of Kurt Grünberg, a German psychologist, Bubis wanted nothing more than to be a “real German.”⁴¹ He titled his 1993 autobiography *I am a German Citizen of the Jewish Faith*⁴² but sadly concluded shortly before his death in 1999, “I have achieved nothing at all. The majority did not even grasp what I found important. We have remained strangers to each other.”⁴³ Bubis ultimately chose to be buried in Israel rather than in Germany. For him the possibility that Eastern European Jews could become Germans seemed particularly remote. Thus the jury is still out on whether the pessimistic conclusions of Leo Baeck and Ignatz Bubis foretell the future or whether the term “Jewish German” will become a lasting reality.

¹ Jeffrey Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

² Peck, *Being Jewish*, pp.154-155.

³ Jonathan Boyarin as quoted in Peck, p. 156.

⁴ Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, translated by Barbara Harshav (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 16.

⁵ Jay Howard Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945-1953* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.296.

⁶ Frederick Kempe, *Father/Land: A Personal Search for the New Germany*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), p.196

⁷ Y. Michael Bodemann, *A Jewish Family in Germany Today: An Intimate Portrait* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), p.6.

⁸ Michael Mickenberg, "The Politics of Citizenship in the New Republic," *Western European Politics*, 2003, Vol. 3, p. 220.

⁹ Mickenberg, "The Politics of Citizenship," p.223.

¹⁰ Micha Guttman, "Der Zukunft zugewandt: Warum über die Frage "Wer ist nach den Religionsgesetz Jude? Gestritten werden sollte" *Jüdisches Allgemeine*, 3,4, 2008.

¹¹ Judith Kessler, "Foreigners in Wonderland: Jewish Immigration from the Former Soviet Union" *ha Galil.com*, October 26, 2007.

¹² Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: the Nazi Past In the Two Germanies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.376.

¹³ Paul Bookbinder, "The Holocaust as a Living Phenomenon in Germany Today," *Holocaust Annual*, No.4, Franklin and Marshall College, 1988.

¹⁴ Rolf Schuette, *German-Jewish Relations, Today and Tomorrow: A German Perspective* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2005), pp.19-20.

¹⁵ Robin Ostow, "From Victims of Antisemitism To Post-Modern Hybrids: Representations Of (Post) Soviet Jews in Germany," *European Judaism*, Volume 36, No. 2, Autumn 2003, pp.110-111.

¹⁶ Gershon Shapiro (Compiler), *Under Fire: The Stories of Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988), Preface.

¹⁷ Colin Nickerson, "A Jewish Renaissance Takes Root," *Boston Globe*, December 29, 2005, p.1.

¹⁸ Kurt Grünberg, "Contaminated Generativity: Holocaust Survivors And Their Children In Germany," translation by Nadja Rosenthal, *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2007, 67, p.85.

¹⁹ Sander Gilman, *Jews in Today's German Culture*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), p.3.

²⁰ Quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, October 25, 2006.

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- ²¹ Sander Gilman, "Becoming a Jew by Becoming a German: the Newest Jewish Writing from the "East," *Shofa: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol.25, No 1, 2006, p.18.
- ²² Gilman, "Becoming a Jew," p.20.
- ²³ Gilman, "Becoming a Jew," p.18.
- ²⁴ Quoted in Gilman, "Becoming a Jew," p.23.
- ²⁵ Heiko Lehmann, "Klezmer in Germany? Germans and Klezmer: Reparations or Contribution," a lecture delivered at the House of World Cultures, Berlin, October 19, 2006, transcript, p.1.
- ²⁶ Lehmann, "Klezmer," p.3.
- ²⁷ Central Committee of German Catholics, "Jews and Christians in Germany: Responsibility in Today's Pluralistic Society" (March 16, 2005), p.1.
- ²⁸ Quoted in Wladimir Struminski, "Man sieht, der andere hat keine Hörner," *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 3.4. 2008, s.3.
- ²⁹ Quoted in Judy Dempsey, "For Germany's Jews, a Visionary Advocate: Holocaust survivor aims for new pride" *International Herald Tribune*, July 5, 2006.
- ³⁰ Joschka Fischer, "Ich habe einen Traum", *Die Zeit*, 46/2007 s.9.
- ³¹ Lynn Rapaport, *Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity and Jewish German Relations* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 39.
- ³² Jerome S. Legge, jr. *Jews, Turks and other Strangers: The Roots of Prejudice in Modern Germany*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 84.
- ³³ Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany*, pp. 106-107.
- ³⁴ Zafer Senocak, quoted in Peck, "Being Jewish in the New Germany, p.107.
- ³⁵ Cem Özdemir, quoted in Kempe, *Father/Land*, p.236.
- ³⁶ Jan Simon, "Ein Jugend in Deutschland" *Die Zeit*, 3,4, s. 13/2008.
- ³⁷ W. Michael Blumenthal, "Speech on the Opening of the Jewish Museum Berlin," Berlin, September 9, 2001, p.1.
- ³⁸ Jeffrey Peck, *A Continuous Tradition of Dialogue and Tolerance: AJC in Germany*, American Jewish Committee, 2006, p.19.
- ³⁹ Otto Schilly, "Speech on the 50th Anniversary of the Leo Baeck Institute," London, November 7, 2005, p.2.
- ⁴⁰ Susan Stern, "Jews in Germany Today: Dynamic Growth, Dramatic Change" Background Papers, German Embassy, Washington DC, June 1997, pp.5-6.
- ⁴¹ Kurt Grünberg, p.85.
- ⁴² Ignatz Bubis, *Ich bin ein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens: Ein Autobiographisches Gespräch mit Edith Kohn* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1993).
- ⁴³ Ignatz Bubis, as quoted in Grünberg, p.85.